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SUBJECT: PUBLIC DIPLOMACY INFLUENCE ANALYSIS IN  
NIGERIA

REF: STATE 033359

1. Introduction: Nigeria is Africa's most populous nation with approximately 130 million people. The country has access to a complex array of media, both foreign and domestic, electronic and print, as well as growing use of the Internet. Nigerian public figures and opinion leaders utilize and are influenced by all forms of media and communication systems. That said, electronic media are most pervasive in Nigerian society and have the strongest reach to mass audiences. A BBC survey of Nigerians estimated that 70 percent of people get their news from radio, 20 percent from television, and 10 percent from newspapers. Given the high reliance on electronic forms of media, the Nigerian Government has been reluctant to give up its control of national and state-level radio and television network stations. Private radio and television stations, though limited to certain geographic markets, continue to make inroads against government media outlets. The government has largely ceded the print media to the private sector, which has a surprisingly high number of daily and weekly newspapers competing for a comparatively small readership. Internet access is growing in Nigeria, although it is often used to misinform, as well as inform public opinion.

2. Given the high degree of government control in the media, press independence remains a work in progress. Thus, Nigerians rely heavily on foreign media outlets, especially BBC, VOA, DW (Germany's Deutsche Welle international broadcast station) and CNN for information about world news and secondarily, Nigerian news. Aware of the popularity of foreign media that derives mainly from decades of military rule and lack of confidence in Nigerian government media, Nigerian officials worry about foreign media influence in Nigeria, and have voiced their displeasure over BBC, VOA and CNN reports, and try to limit use of BBC and VOA broadcasts by domestic broadcasters. Recently, the National Broadcasting Commission forbade the direct rebroadcast of foreign news by Nigerian affiliate stations. This measure does not affect Nigerian audiences who receive BBC, VOA, DW, CNN, or other foreign broadcasts via satellite television or shortwave radio.

3. For foreign radio broadcasters, Nigeria represents two distinct audiences divided largely by language and geography. Roughly half of Nigeria's population lives in northern Nigeria, speaks Hausa as a first language, or uses Hausa as a second language or lingua franca. This group is predominantly Muslim while southern Nigeria is largely English-speaking and Christian. While many southern Yorubas are also Muslim, Islamic scholars (and Nigerians Muslims themselves) make a clear distinction between Yoruba Muslims and those from the north. Thus, BBC and VOA have English as well as Hausa language programs to cover northern audiences while English programming is more popular in the south. The current political differences between the government and main opposition party (based in northern Nigeria) sharpen the divide, and northern media frequently criticize the southwest-based media for the latter's poor understanding of the north.

4. In Nigeria, however, it is important to distinguish between how people receive news and information, and how they ultimately arrive at conclusions regarding that information. There are also differences between how elites process information and effective strategies to influence elite opinion, and how average Nigerians get their information and formulate opinions. U.S. government-to-Nigerian government influence

strategies are only partially successful in Nigeria, as Nigerian public officials are very dependent on the opinions of other African government officials and voices from the Non-Aligned Movement. For contentious issues between the USG and Nigeria, we should look to respected intermediaries and messengers who are held in high esteem by Nigerian officials - either distinguished African-American leaders or other African officials who enjoy access in Nigeria. Regardless of what they hear from the media, average Nigerians place great stock in the opinions of local religious and traditional leaders, and can be influenced (both positively and negatively) by such people. In both the north and south, traditional and religious leaders play an increasingly important role as one moves away from urban centers and as literacy levels decline. End introduction.

#### The Media Environment in Nigeria

15. The media environment in Nigeria is remarkably complex, with sharp north-south differences. In both the north and south, however, radio remains the means by which most Nigerians hear news. Nigerian radio broadcasting was totally government controlled at the federal and state levels until September 1994, when the National Broadcasting Commission approved the first private radio station. With digitized studios, Western-style programming and a 24-hour-a-day format, Ray Power 100 FM quickly became the most popular radio station in Lagos and its environs. Between mid-1996 and 1999, seven new private radio stations were established. These include Minaj Radio in the east, Benin City-based Independent Radio and Television (ITV), Lagos-based Rhythm 93.7, Cool FM, Star FM, and Ray Power 2 FM, which BBC sponsored. The federal government approved licenses for 16 radio stations in 2002. A new opposition party (ANPP) funded radio station, Freedom Radio, began operations in Kano in early 2004. As with television, independent radio stations lack national coverage and are mostly regionally based. In addition, the Government of Nigeria sponsors the Voice of Nigeria (VON), which broadcasts news and feature stories about Nigeria within the country as well as outside Nigeria to neighboring West African nations and South Africa, where many Nigerians live.

16. The government regulates the national television airwaves through the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC), a nominally independent body. The federal government-owned National Television Authority (NTA) network operates stations in the state capitals and has two "autonomous" stations in Lagos. In 1993, the NBC approved licenses for fourteen independent broadcasters. By 1996, however, only eight broadcasters were in operation and the other six licenses were revoked. The NTA is the only national television broadcasting operation. Minaj and AIT Raypower are popular independent television stations, but do not have national coverage. Galaxy TV is popular in Lagos and Ibadan, while Channels TV in Lagos is also a critically acclaimed independent station with a largely southwestern following. Commercially, NTA, AIT, Minaj, and Channels are available within Africa via satellite, while AIT and Minaj broadcasts may be received by U.S. and British satellite subscribers.

17. The print media sector is the most competitive and varied in Nigeria, with more than 20 national English-language newspapers and a half dozen weekly newsmagazines. State-owned newspapers continue to face financial problems and competition from the national dailies. Most have either gone under or are produced sporadically; those that remain are publicity vehicles for the state governments. Despite the large number of papers competing for newsstand space and readership, circulation figures for newspapers are low - less than 100,000 per paper and many less than 25,000; with combined circulation figures at roughly 750,000 - a low figure for a country whose total population is estimated at 130 million. Most Nigerians live on less than one dollar per day and cannot afford to spend half of that on a newspaper. In urban areas in particular, many people share newspapers, read them at newsstands

without purchasing them, or discuss news stories on public transport.

#### Regional Media Differences

18. In the north, radio is particularly important in reaching large audiences, and the Hausa language broadcasts are very popular. Both Nigerian and foreign stations, BBC, VOA, DW inclusive, have large listenerships. A recent VOA survey indicates that the BBC leads in the northern radio market with 53.9 percent; VOA has 44.7 percent of the market while DW has 36 percent. (Note: Many people listen to more than one station. End Note) Because of the north's relative low literacy rate and lack of development, television, especially English language broadcasts, does not yet reach large audiences. But satellite broadcasts -- not only BBC and CNN but Arabic-language stations from the Middle East -- reach and influence the elite. Cable television subscriptions, bringing international stations to Nigerian viewers by satellite, have become more important in affluent communities, including in the north. In addition to CNN, BBC, MTV and other commercial movie channels, Nigeria's cable providers bundle free Arabic channels -- courtesy of Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates -- into the channel mix. ABG and MG Satellite Communications are northern Nigeria's main cable distributors for the Arabic channels.

19. While radio reaches the widest audiences in the south, radio is viewed as an entertainment media as much as a news source, with FM and AM stations playing a wide variety of music forms. Higher education levels and more urbanized populations make television important for influencing southern elites and middle-class Nigerians, but television is largely non-existent for average citizens in villages. Many private television stations replay BBC or CNN news stories of international events. Newspapers are also more readily available in the southwest, since most are printed there and northerners view most of the southern papers as ethnically biased.

110. Two northern-focused Internet sites such as [www.almizan.faithweb.com](http://www.almizan.faithweb.com) and [www.gamji.com](http://www.gamji.com) have elite followings, meaning their influence reaches far beyond the few individuals who have direct access to the Internet. These opinions are constantly reprinted in newspapers or made reference to in op-ed policy debates. The gamji site has a cult following and has become very influential with northern intellectuals, labor leaders, northern Muslim/Christian youth activists, NGO, and student groups. Issues discussed are far-ranging, but substantially anti-U.S., including events in the Middle East, September 11, and the war against terror. The south has no similar geographic/ethnically focused websites; users log on to [allAfrica.com](http://allAfrica.com) or the CNN and BBC websites for international online news.

111. Like the south, northern newspapers are not the primary source of news for average Nigerians, but they do have some sway among intellectuals and political opinion leaders. Two more prominent papers are Hausa publications, Gaskiya and Al-Mizan. Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo ("Truth is Better Than Money") is owned by a consortium of northern state governments, this sister newspaper to The New Nigerian is the oldest Hausa language newspaper in northern Nigeria. For 64 years Gaskiya has reflected a pro-north, anti-West focus. Circulation is estimated at 50,000. Al-Mizan is a radical Islamic Hausa weekly paper that strongly communicates anti-American views and advocates an Islamic State. Sold for less than the other papers, it is published in Zaria on Friday, and it is characteristically sold to Friday Mosque congregations. Total print run is 12,000, but estimated readership is over 60,000. The newspaper is also available on the Internet through [www.faithweb.com](http://www.faithweb.com). Al-Mizan is influential with radical Muslim youths. Its founder and publisher is an Ahmadu Bello University trained economist and student of the Iranian Revolution, Sheikh El-Zak-Zaky. Two English dailies, the New Nigerian and the Daily Trust, are also published in the north. The New Nigerian is managed by northern state governments, and adheres to a pro-government editorial line, while the independent

Trust follows a strong anti-American and anti-West policy. Circulation for both papers is estimated to be similar to that of the Hausa papers.

¶12. Similar to the north, many of the southern papers and broadcasting stations are owned by politicians and/or Nigerian businessmen interested in establishing a platform by which to express their views. Many operate in the red, and are supported by the owners' other business concerns. Some southern papers have established partnerships and use material from abroad; the Financial Times contributes about one-third of Business Day's material; The Sun - a tabloid paper featuring gossip, sports, and some news stories, mirrors the Sun of London. Local language and ethnically based papers are important in the south. The Champion is published in Lagos and is a barometer of Igbo opinion. The Yoruba language Alaroye is seen as the leading medium that reaches villages and the urban poor in the southwest. Alaroye is also loosely affiliated with a Yoruba radio station to increase its impact. Both the paper and radio station appeal to English-speaking elites in the southwest, and the viewpoints run from neutral to pro-American.

¶13. Aside from traditional media, a broad category of other information sources also includes the influential teachings in the mosques, churches, Sunday schools and Islamic schools. Some of the opinions in circulation come from visiting scholars and clerics, and are a particular source of influence in an increasingly illiterate northern Nigeria. There is a sector of sponsored pro-Islamic information sources with grassroots influence that is primarily religious and anti-U.S. in character. Some of them, especially the pro-Islamic sponsored literature, pamphlets and hand bills exploit the Hausa language to build a large readership. Internet chat groups are also influential with the elite and political class. In terms of direct third-country influence, both Iran and Saudi Arabia are of note. Iran's efforts are formally aimed at spreading the Shia form of Islam in local Koranic schools and Muslim populations. Publications are part of an effort that includes placing teachers in Koranic schools and study groups in Iran. The targets for Saudi Arabia's effort are Islamic clerics, Islamic scholars and the academic community. Like the Iranian sponsorships, the Saudi effort includes scholarships for study at King Abdulaziz University in Saudi Arabia.

¶14. Christian organizations in the south are a large force for mobilizing crowds but are not generally viewed as political actors; parishes actively discourage political messages. A major source of southern information (but not necessarily influence) on the U.S. comes from relatives living in the States. With the majority of the students and immigrants to the U.S. coming from the south, southerners are well connected to the U.S.

Who Matters and the MPP  
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¶15. The political class is influential, but the Nigerian President makes the critical decisions. The top political party leaders, religious leaders, labor leaders, traditional rulers, youth organizations, and academics have varying levels of influence in the government's decision-making. The military, although under civilian control, still retains significant influence, and Muslim clerics are the most influential in northern Nigeria. Journalists are important in informing the public and mobilizing public opinion, but have little direct influence as individuals.

-- Global Health: Opinion leaders include government health workers, NGOs, and other donors, and normal USG influence channels tend to be effective. Nigeria recently witnessed however, the strength of northern religious and political leaders in setting back the polio vaccination campaign through the spread of misinformation in a number of northern states. Anti-U.S. Nigerian media supported this effort. Our ability to directly influence such people is extremely limited. The polio issue underscored that a largely illiterate population is more influenced by local leadership than by mass media. While the mission suggested respected health officials from

other Islamic countries as possible interlocutors, there remains concern over the utility/political neutrality of such people. On HIV/AIDS, there exists cooperation and willingness to work with the USG at a number of government levels and within all geographic zones. Early engagement of traditional, political, and other key decision makers will be critical to maintain positive cooperation on HIV/AIDS and will ensure USG targets under President Bush's initiative will be reached.

-- Anti-Terrorism: Key personnel in this arena are the Nigerian security services, including military, police and intelligence officials. Nigerian political culture does not and is unlikely to support international terrorism within Nigeria. Even northern Muslim politicians, many of whom have a military background, would not see it in their interest to support a fundamentalist Islamic state, despite paying lip service to Sharia implementation in the north. For them, identification with Islam is a political means to gaining power, money, and the patronage that comes from political power. All three groups remain outside the influence of the independent media to a large degree. The military are keen to be perceived as superior among African militaries and have a tradition of international cooperation/interaction with other militaries. The Nigerian police, who traditionally have worked to maintain the political status quo rather than protect Nigerian citizens, are also interested in cultivating a more professional image and increasingly looking outward for support. The intelligence services see cooperation with the U.S. far outweighing non-cooperation on issues relating to terrorism. All groups are amenable to official channels of USG influence in this area.

-- Democratic Systems and Practices: Nigerian politicians all subscribe to democracy in theory but in practice elections at both the national and local levels have been deemed by observers as less than fair and free. The separation of powers is questionable; an independent press remains in its infancy. The USG must work with members of the political class and civil society to implement democratic reforms, with the former group most resistant to altering the status quo. Effective interlocutors include African-American politicians, other African leaders and respected personalities on the Continent, and members of the Commonwealth. President Obasanjo is favorably disposed to South African President Mbeki and Ghanaian President John Kufour; he also pays heed to British Prime Minister Blair, U.S. President Bush, and the UN Secretary General. As much as Nigerian political leaders appeal to the Nigerian American members of the diaspora to assist Nigeria, the latter are viewed as biased and too critical in most matters of Nigerian domestic politics.

-- Economic Growth and Development: Nigerian government officials and members of the business community are key to this MPP goal. President Obasanjo has put in place a respected economic team, Nigeria has great economic potential, and the government constantly appeals for foreign investment. Overcoming corruption, insecurity, and establishing effective rule of law are keys to fulfilling this MPP goal. The most effective interlocutors will be outside Nigeria, as the GON maintains a cozy relationship with corporate Nigeria that will be difficult to break. Other African business leaders, international banking/finance groups, and Nigeria's neighbors (who could benefit from a economically stable Nigeria) should help in this regard. The Nigerian media have been helpful in highlighting corruption and inadequacies in the GON's approach to fighting corruption. Unions and labor, with their ability to transcend regional, sectarian and ethnic cleavages, are an important factor in the economic sphere, as are civil society/youth groups in the oil-rich Delta region. The latter area is rife for conflict based on ethnic, political and economic rivalries. Conflict resolution strategies and interlocutors skilled in mediating ethnic dispute settlements would be helpful for such problems.

-- Food Security and Agricultural Development: The GON and farmers are the key groups and normal

USG influence works with in both the government and private sectors. This is an area of GON interest, and one in which the GON cooperates with the USG and where we can exercise some level of effective influence.

-- Law Enforcement and Judicial Systems: The Nigerian law enforcement community had little to no role under the former military regimes. As a profession, it does not have the same status in Nigeria as in other societies, and police are viewed by the public as predators rather than protectors. They will require continued attention from international police assistance programs and professional development programs, as well as GON political commitment to weed out corrupt police officials. Within Nigeria, NGO human rights/legal watchdog groups and the media can provide oversight of police officers and to ensure that inadequacies are effectively handled.

-- Resolution of Regional Conflicts: Nigeria enjoys its reputation as an African leader and the government will continue to support regional peacekeeping efforts within Africa as long as international support is there to pay for such exercises. The Nigerian public also sees Nigeria as having a role within Africa in this regard. Other African states, ECOWAS, the UN, the Commonwealth, as well as the Nigeria Conflict Advisory Committee (USAID, World Bank, DFID, and UNDP) and the USG are effective centers of influence.

-- Public Diplomacy and Influencing Nigerian Public Opinion: Both Nigeria's independent press and government media are willing to work with the USG and provide us with access on many issues; traditionally anti-U.S./anti-West media are more reticent. For the latter group, American Muslims are effective speakers, and moderate Islamic voices necessary to counter extremists' views and the anti-USG, anti-West conspiracy theories common in the north. With the growth of the Internet among journalists and easier access to wire services, traditional USG products such as Washington File stories are difficult to place as the same information can be easily obtained from a non-partisan news source. Being able to provide finished media products of Mission events (tapes for television and radio stations, particularly in Hausa for northern radio) as well as radio/TV programming of pro-U.S./West interest to Muslim audiences that can be rebroadcast would be helpful in furthering USG bilateral efforts in Nigeria.

ROBERTS